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Book 14









# TOKENS

OF THE

## DIVINE DISPLEASURE,

IN THE LATE

CONFLAGRATIONS IN NEW-YORK, & OTHER JUDGMENTS,

ILLUSTRATED.

"The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." ROM. I. 18. "Our God is a consuming fire." HEB. XII. 29. "He executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." PSAL. CIII. 6.

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BY JAMES R. WILLSON, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE COLDENHAM CONGREGATION.

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# TOKENS

## OF THE

### DIVINE DISPLEASURE,

&C. &C.

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IN the late conflagrations, which have desolated so large a portion of the city of New-York, a severe judgment of Heaven has been inflicted on that metropolis. That calamitous event is the latest in a series of tokens of the divine displeasure against this commonwealth. "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" Such afflictive dispensations are not "some chance that hath happened unto us." Affliction springeth not of the dust. "God grieveth not willingly, nor afflicteth the children of men." If amidst many and abundant demonstrations of Jehovah's goodness to this nation, there have been painful and heavy visitations, it is because the sins of the people have provoked the divine displeasure. It cannot be unprofitable to investigate the doings of transgressors, that the Christian observer may discover why the God of heaven "pleads a controversy" with the land. An humble attempt is made to do this in the following pages.

Soon after the assembling of the Legislature of the State of New-York, in January, 1832, a motion was made in the house of Assembly, to abolish the practice of opening the sessions with prayer to Almighty God. It had been the practice of both houses, soon after they were organized, to elect as Chaplains, all the regular Clergy of the city of Albany, who were pastors of congregations, to officiate in rotation, in commencing the daily business by morning prayer. For this service, all the chaplains together, received as a compensation what was equal to the pay of one member of each house, to be distributed equally among them. The whole sum annually appropriated for this purpose, amounted to about seven hundred and fifty dollars. To authorize this expenditure a provision

was embodied in the revised statutes of the commonwealth. The motion to dispense with what was called legislative prayer, came from the infidel part of the house, and was followed up by a protracted and zealous argument on the part of its friends. It was plead that many members did not believe in the duty or efficacy of prayer—that they did not attend respectfully while the prayer was offered up—that not a few absented themselves from the house until it was concluded, and that they must either do so, or submit to have imposed on them religious services which they did not approve. These arguments were drawn from facts. So little reverential deportment in devotional acts, as in the legislature of New-York, was no where else seen. Some members had their hats on, some read newspapers, and some engaged in conversation, while the chaplain was employed in offering up the morning prayer to God. It was a common remark of the clergy, that the disorderly conduct of the members rendered this service rather painful, and that in these addresses to a throne of grace, they had little freedom. The enemies of the christian religion used also other arguments than those drawn from facts. They appealed to the genius of the constitution, which they asserted discarded all religion from civil legislation. They argued that infidels and believers in the truth of revealed religion, were placed on an equal footing—and that the employing of the ministers of religion to pray in the house was a violation of those rights of conscience which were guaranteed to deists by the constitution. It was said that the people sent them there to make laws, not to pray, and that the time of the legislature, which ought to be employed in the transaction of the people's business, was uselessly thrown away in prayer. But the argument on which they chiefly relied was that the appropriation of the people's money to pay chaplains, was unconstitutional, as it was a direct support of the christian religion and gave it a preference over infidelity; whereas all such preference was forbidden by the constitution. They insisted that church and state were connected by these prayers.

All these reasonings, if they may be honored with that name, were mingled with malevolent insinuations and attacks on the religion of Jesus, as fanaticism, and unworthy of the countenance of liberal and enlightened men.

In answer to all these infidel vituperations of christianity, and on behalf of calling on the God of heaven, for his divine aid in the business of legislation and his blessing on its acts, there was little zeal displayed, and not much power of argu-

ment. When the vote was taken, however, out of more than one hundred members twenty seven only voted in the infidel ranks, and the usual election of chaplains took place. The subject was not touched in the senate, where indeed, as that body is smaller and the members graver and more aged, there had always been more respectful attention to the morning devotions.

Petitions from the infidel part of the community were got up in various parts of the country, and presented to the legislature during the same sessions, praying them to abolish legislative prayer and all the laws of the state respecting the sanctification of the Lord's day. On these petitions a special committee was appointed. These memorials were signed by some thousands of the citizens. Near the close of the session the committee, to whom they had been referred, presented a long report on the subject of prayer in the legislature, leaving untouched the subject of the Sabbath. In this report, the arguments which had been offered in the course of the preceding debate, were embodied, and it concluded with the recommendation of a resolution that the prayer of the petitioners be granted. This had been expected from the complexion of the committee, and was probably intended, when they were appointed. The christian religion was treated with scorn and derision in the report, and its votaries represented as misguided fanatics. This brought up the question again and produced a considerably protracted discussion. The same ground was travelled over and the subject treated in the same way. But the decision was postponed, and the report with all its sins on its head, published, as a part of the legislative proceedings, in the journals of the state. Such a document, issued under such circumstances, is considered by the people, as armed with a semi-official authority. It was no doubt designed both to influence and test the feelings of the citizens on the topic which it discussed. By the ungodly, it was hailed as a precursor of the abolition of the christian religion; while the religious part of the community regarded, with emotions of sorrow, such an indication of the growth of infidelity, thus proclaimed in the high places of the land.

Soon after the opening of the session of the Assembly on the following January, 1833, the motion to abolish prayer to God was renewed. When the question came to a vote, it was found that the number of avowed infidels had increased from twenty-seven to forty. The same temper that had been displayed in the former Assembly was manifested in this; and

though a majority still voted for the election of chaplains, it was thought prayers were disagreeable to the greater part of both houses. After a notice had been served on the clergy of the city that they had been elected to serve as chaplains, a meeting of the city ministers was called ; and upon solemn deliberation, it was resolved that they would not accept the offered chaplaincy. The vote was unanimous with the exception of one Methodist minister. It was perceived that every year, the Deists would make the legislature of the state, a theatre for the dissemination of their demoralizing and ruinous infidelity ; while at the same time it was believed that a great majority of the legislature, were it not for the strong sentiment in favour of christianity in the commonwealth, would much prefer to have no prayer.

It soon appeared that this judgment of the irreligion of the house was not uncharitable ; for the law of the revised statutes, providing for the pay of chaplains was speedily rescinded, only nine members voting in the negative. Since that time, the voice of prayer has not been heard, in the New-York halls of legislation, and by a solemn legislative act, all reliance on the God of Israel, for his spirit, aid and blessing in conducting its civil affairs, has been cast off, and infidelity has obtained a formal triumph. Thus is exhibited the painful spectacle, of a people greatly prospered in the bounty of Heaven—a people who have the oracles of the living God in nearly every family—a people among whom there are thousands of christian churches ; such a people proclaiming by their representatives, in the face of the nations, that they do not and will not look to the God of Heaven for his favour or protection as a commonwealth. What christian, nay, what pagan nation has ever done a deed like this ? “ Pass over to the isles of Chittim and see ; and send to Kedar, and consider diligently and see if there be such a thing : Hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods ? But my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit. Be astonished O ye heavens at this, and be ye horribly afraid, be ye very desolate saith the Lord. For my people have committed two great evils ; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” Jer. ii, 10, 13.

The principle promulged in the New-York Legislature, was carried out in the departments of government. In 1832, when the land was threatened with an alarming visitation of God, the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, pe-

tioned the President of the United States to proclaim a fast, that the nation might humble itself before God, and implore the divine mercy. He refused to act in the case, and assigned in substance the same arguments that had been plead in the New-York Legislature against prayer. It was not, he said, constitutional—it was not accordant with the spirit of the civil institutions of the United States, for the chief executive magistrate, to call upon the people to humble themselves before God. The civil rulers of the land could not as such do homage to Almighty God, or invite the people to bow down before their maker. Individuals could do so ; the church might seek the favour of Heaven ; it was all proper, but the nation, in its civil capacity, was prohibited from such acts of devotion by constitutional barriers. Application, on the same occasion, was made by the clergy of Albany to the Governor of New-York, requesting the recommendation of a state Fast. They also were met by a refusal, and the same reasons assigned—the church would be united to the state, by such an act—it was not permitted by the constitution. How these reasons could be valid in the mouth of the governor of New-York, or at least how they could be deemed consistent with other acts of that functionary, it was not easy to perceive ; for he and his predecessors had annually appointed a day of thanksgiving for the state. But it was the fashion of the times, which must be obeyed, however pressing the request, and however tremendous the dreaded calamity. The Mayor of the city of New-York, and the corporation of the city of Albany responded to these infidel sentiments and at first refused to recommend a day of fasting to the citizens of the metropolis and of the capital.\*

Thus we have given a brief outline of the sins of public functionaries ; let us now review the judgments of Jehovah, which an enlightened posterity, however the majority of the present generation may decide, will consider as inflicted for these flagrant acts of dishonour done to his name.

The winter of 1831—2 was unusually severe, and the approach of spring alarmingly tardy. The inclemency of the season continued, from its early commencement until its termination, five weeks longer than its ordinary length. It was the opinion of enlightened farmers, who intelligently estimated passing events, that the loss of each averaged, at least one hun-

\*After the hand of God was actually laid on them and all were filled with consternation, these constitutional scruples were dispensed with, and a day of fasting was appointed, by the corporation of Albany.

dred dollars. This resulted from the greater consumption of hay and grain, fed to cattle, and from the debilitated, diseased state and death of the flocks. In the state of New-York, there are about two hundred and fifty thousand farmers, that number multiplied by one hundred, makes an aggregate loss, in one year, of \$25,000,000. The whole sum appropriated to the pay of chaplains was not \$800. Days were wasted in proving that the constitution forbid the expenditure—that it ought not to be made—and that the rights of conscience, the vicegerent of God in the soul, forbid the appropriation of a few hundred dollars to the service of the Almighty. Surely the language of Heaven in this dispensation was, “the gold and the silver are mine.” Few, however, regarded the severe and long winter as the doing of God, and still fewer thought it a judgment on the nation for any sin. The visitation had a hardening effect on a great majority of the people, as those of old by which Egypt was smitten, had on Pharaoh. Other tokens of the divine wrath followed, in quick and fearful succession. There were destructive freshets in the rivers, which were swollen suddenly to an unusual height, by the rapid melting of the snows and by great rains; so that before the masses of ice that had accumulated during a hard and long winter were diminished, they were broken up and borne with destructive force down the currents, destroying farms, and bridges, and reducing large portions of the villages to wrecks. In many places the embankments of the Hudson and Erie Canal, were torn away, so that much time occupied in repairs elapsed, before the great trade on that thoroughfare could be resumed.—The savages on the western frontier, broke in upon the new settlements, killed some of the inhabitants, destroyed much property, and compelled thousands to fly in want from their dwellings.

In the southern states, especially in South Carolina, a spirit of insubordination to the general government, under the name of Nullification, threatened the disruption of the union and all the horrors of a civil war. As if all these were little, that fearful scourge of God, the Cholera, invaded the land early in the same summer. After having cut off many, by a speedy and dreadful death, in Quebec and Montreal, it entered the state of New-York, and travelled rapidly from Plattsburgh, by Burlington, and other villages, to Mechanicsville, within twenty miles of Albany. For a while it was there stayed, and shortly, for a season, disappeared from the borders of the United States. The alarm which had been deep and general subsided, and

men, like Agag, the King of Amalek, said, "surely the bitterness of death is past." Like Pharaoh they still hardened their hearts and refused to return to the Lord from the error of their ways. In the latter end of June, it again made its appearance, attacking the city of New-York. It was at this time that an attempt was made in the corporation of Albany, to procure the recommendation of a fast day. The corporation sat to a late hour engaged in the discussion, until the mover perceiving that there was a majority opposed to the measure, many even making it a subject of profane banter, did not press it on to a vote. Within a few hours after the government of the city had refused to humble itself before God—at three o'clock on Tuesday morning—one of the citizens sickened with cholera and was a corpse before noon. On the afternoon of the same day there was another death by this plague in the city. These deaths happened on the third of July. The corporation had made ample preparations, for celebrating, on the fourth, the great national anniversary—there were to be splendid military parades, orations, dinners, toasts, evening revels, and all kinds of dissipation, to which one day every year is devoted in this nation. The anticipated joy was turned into sadness. All faces gathered blackness, and the stoutest hearts, and most hardened sinners quailed with fear. The destroying angel was seen standing over the city with his drawn sword in his hand, ready to bathe it in the blood of thousands. All business was nearly suspended—all thoughts of revelling abandoned—and on the fourth, one of the largest churches in the city was crowded to overflowing, with people of all ranks, listening to temperance addresses. That day Heaven granted a respite—no case of cholera occurred. But it appeared again on the fifth. In a few days both the Metropolis and the Capital were converted into vast hospitals. The weekly deaths amounted to thousands. The course of trade was stopped and nearly all other business suspended; as merchants and other strangers were deterred generally from resorting to the cities. Death on his pale horse rode through the land, diffusing over its wide extent mourning, lamentation and woe. Philadelphia, Trenton, and other cities and numerous villages were visited by the destroyer, but the State of New-York suffered more severely that summer than any other part of the Union. It was estimated that this state, besides the death of many thousands of her citizens, would have been richer by fifteen millions of dollars, had the plague not visited her borders. This loss was sustained in consequence of the interruption of trade,

the paupers made by the pestilence, the corrupted state of the atmosphere such that the fruits did not ripen, many thousands in the cities spending the greater part of the season in idleness, not having employment, as building and other branches of mechanical labour were in great part suspended, and multitudes disabled from working. So that that very year in which the majesty of Heaven had been insulted in the halls of legislation, by arguments against the giving of a part, a very small part, of the property of the commonwealth, for the purpose of honoring him, the state was made poorer by a sum, falling not much short of forty millions of dollars, and by the loss of many thousands of her citizens.

As, however, an abundance still remained of the ample treasures, which had been replenished by the munificence of God, and as no famine ensued, few thought of estimating the great amount of the loss, and the many said, "the bricks have fallen down, we will build with hewn stone." There was no reformation, but, on the contrary, the wicked became more emboldened and hardened in sin. In the autumn of that calamitous year, the presidential election occurred. Faction raged with unprecedented violence, and it appeared that the wicked were excited, like him of Egypt, to tenfold opposition against the God of Heaven, by the judgments, with which they had been visited.

In the summer of 1833—4, the plague of cholera continued his march, "filling with bodies dead," many parts of the southern and western states, while in the northern and eastern sections of the union, some respite was given.

In late events, we have abundant and painful evidence that the judgment of the pestilence, was not better improved in the southern states, than it had been in the northern. The great sin of the south—the fruitful parent of a thousand other immoralities—is Negro Slavery. Without doubt nine tenths of the people of the non-slaveholding states have always believed that the holding of the coloured people of the south in bondage, is a sin against God, and an outrage on the rights of man. Acting on this belief those northern states, in which slaves were held, have abolished the evil by their emancipation. It has long been cherished as a general expectation, in the free states, that the progress of illumination in the south, and the operation of the principles of freedom, embodied in the civil institutions of the nation, would lead to the gradual and entire manumission of the southern slaves. When the colonization society was organized, and announced to the

northern people, it was hailed as a happy means calculated greatly to accelerate an event of which all were ardently desirous. Funds were poured into its treasury with a liberality, almost entirely prompted by the anti-slavery principle. Had it been regarded as a measure to bind more firmly the fetters of the slave, its dollars would not have amounted, north of Mason's and Dickson's line, to mills. After an experiment of nearly twenty years by the colonization society, and waiting, in disappointed expectation, for more than half a century on the operation of liberal principles, and meeting with disappointment only, it was determined by many enlightened and benevolent men to bring the question of emancipation before the public. They saw the number of slaves multiplying to a frightful extent—they saw the fetters of the slave becoming every year more firmly rivetted—they saw seventy thousand human beings yearly added to the list of slaves—they saw hundreds of thousands of their fellow creatures deprived by slavery of all the means of intellectual improvement—and, what is infinitely more deplorable, cut off from the means of grace; and they resolved to make an effort. The northern people saw themselves bound by the Federal constitution to support all this oppression, and aid the south in sustaining what they deemed iniquitous. As the south had neglected even to commence the application of the principles of American liberty to their coloured population, and as the very discussion of the subject began to be held criminal among the holders of slaves; many thought it was time the attention of the nation should be called to this alarming and rapidly accumulating national evil. Gradual emancipation had been expected from the influence of the principles of freedom—gradual emancipation had been hoped for from the operations of the colonization society—gradual emancipation had disappointed them in the one case fifty years and in the other twenty. They found all this was as vain as to hope for the gradual emancipation of the drunkard from the slavery of intemperance. Indeed the enlightened and efficient pleadings of eloquence in the cause of temperance, prepared the way and it probably led to the doctrine of immediate emancipation. It is perfectly certain that, in many instances, those individuals who have been most zealous and forward in the cause of temperance, are the zealous friends of immediate emancipation. Besides all this, happy in the enjoyment of the sweets of liberty as the best earthly boon of heaven, born in the home of freedom and nurtured in the lap of liberty, they did not understand how any man could be a slave and be happy. They

knew the slave to be degraded, they believed him to be wretched, and they had "compassion on his bonds." By the grant of Heaven and by the laws of their country, they were certain they had an inalienable right to the free discussion of this topic. They embarked in the cause with the same deliberate determination, the same boldness and the same magnanimity, with which they had enlisted themselves in the ranks of temperance, and determined to do their duty to God, and to their country. Anti-Slavery societies were formed by such men, with such views, in some of the New England states, in the state of New-York, in Pennsylvania, in Ohio, and in Indiana, in the summer of 1833, and in the following winter.—These were all connected together, after the example of the American Bible Society, and the American Temperance Society, in a National Society. The south may rage and denounce as ignorant fanatics, the friends of the oppressed in the north, and may rave through the whole vocabulary of vituperation, but they know that the men who have enlisted themselves under the Anti-slavery banners, will bear a comparison with the most intelligent and best citizens of this commonwealth.

In that week of May, when the benevolent societies of the land hold their anniversaries, in the city of New-York, an attempt was made in 1834, to celebrate that of the anti-slavery society. The passions of the great mob were aroused, by interested men who profited by commercial intercourse with the south, by politicians who courted southern votes, and by the editors of newspapers, who sought southern subscribers. The city became a scene of tumult and riot, such as had never before been witnessed in that metropolis. The houses and churches of anti-slavery men were attacked by a licentious and lawless mob, while their persons were threatened with every violence that brute force can inflict. These disgraceful outrages were undoubtedly countenanced, if not excited by men in high places. The friends of liberty, however are not easily intimidated. They resolved to persevere. The attempts to prevent discussion by the outrageous violence of mobs, so far from arresting the progress of investigation, provoked inquiry and stimulated effort. It was like the force employed by the British in Boston, at the commencement of the American Revolution, accelerating the progress of the cause, which it was intended to ruin. Meetings of the societies already formed were held, liberal subscriptions were offered, agents were appointed, and new societies organized. Many, who had been

zealous in the promotion of the colonization society, when they found its leading men apologizing for the evil of slavery, and violent in their denunciations of the doctrine of immediate emancipation, abandoned that association, and enlisted themselves openly under the anti-slavery banner. More progress was made in the summer of 1834, and during the following winter, than could have been anticipated by the most sanguine friends of African freedom. Some of the ablest pens in the nation had been employed in advocating the cause of immediate emancipation. Among these the Rev. Mr. Phelps of Boston, Mrs. Child, of the same city, and Mr. Wm. Jay, are the most prominent. Their books are replete with able and dispassionate argument, and distinguished for that eloquence which the love of liberty inspires. They were widely circulated, read with delight, and made numerous converts. The circulation of the *Liberator* of Boston, and the *Emancipator* of New-York, was greatly enlarged, and diffused correct information and sound reasoning on the subject. Such strength had the cause acquired, that when the great anniversary week of the benevolent societies, in New-York, arrived, in May 1835, the Anti-Slavery society was permitted to hold its meeting, unmolested by the mob, was numerously attended, and eloquent addresses heard with attention and approbation. The reports of its progress, and the exhibition of its resources alarmed the friends of oppression, and awakened their most bitter opposition, and fiercest rage. The means had been provided, by subscriptions to the *Emancipator* and other papers, with very large and generous donations, to print and circulate emancipation tracts and papers monthly to the number of one hundred and fifty thousand. There were many subscribers in the southern states—a circumstance which perhaps more than all others alarmed, the slavery men.

Many packages of these papers were sent by mail to Charleston, South Carolina, some to subscribers and others for gratuitous distribution. As soon as the fact became known in that city, a mob composed of persons of the highest rank in society assembled, seized the packages and burnt them. The Postmaster of Charleston wrote to the Postmaster General, requesting instructions on the subject; to which that officer replied, that he had no power to interfere, but that while he would not authorize such acts of violence done to the United States mail, he did not disapprove them, thus giving his sanction, in part, in a case, wherein he confessed he had no legitimate power to decide. It was substantially authorizing mobs to desecrate

the mail and constituting every postmaster a censor of the press. The post master of Charleston, wrote also to the post master of New-York, requesting him not to mail in his office, the papers of the anti-slavery society. With this he complied, and refused their transmission. For all these arbitrary acts, the ordinary plea of tyrants was set up—necessity.

Within a few days after this decision of the New-York post master, a fire broke out, on the 12th of August, in Fulton street, a central part of the city—and before its progress could be arrested, laid in ashes, nearly one whole square. Some book stores, printing offices of books and newspapers, and many offices of periodicals were consumed. Such a destruction of literature by fire, never before occurred in the city. The newspaper press had been generally active in the excitement of the mobs—it had apologized for oppression, it was a great source of revenue to the post office department; and it suffered very severely in this conflagration. About forty buildings, in the heart of the city, the greater part of them sumptuous edifices, were laid in ruins, and the destruction of property amounted to about one million of dollars. The arguments and remonstrances of the friends of human liberty had been met, not with sober reasoning, but with the outcry of “incendiary! incendiary!” and divine Providence sent on the city a real burning, which destroyed in a few hours the fruits of many years painful industry.

All, however, passed unheeded and the hand of God was seen in none of these events. “O Lord when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see.” When it was found that the slave masters of the south, were alarmed, excited, enraged, and as they have long done, when displeased with any doings of northern men, threatened a dissolution of the union,—great meetings were held in New-York, Albany, Portland, Boston, Philadelphia, and other places, to express, as they said, their sympathy with their brethren of the south. The sounds of the slave-driver’s lash and the groans of the oppressed, which had been conveyed to their ears by every breeze from the south for fifty years, had not awakened their sympathy, or softened their hearts. But when the oppressor cries out that the property which he holds in human flesh and blood and souls, is endangered; when the opulent and the powerful who fatten on the spoils of oppression, complain of free discussion their rich friends in the north are moved with compassion; hold meetings, deliver harrangues, and pass resolutions, expressive of their fellow feeling for their slave-holding brethren, their deep abhorrence of the course of those who

plead for the cause of universal emancipation, and pledge their aid to sustain the arm of oppression. What a spectacle this in a great, a free and a generous nation! No pity for those who groan from generation to generation under the yoke of bondage; while floods of sympathetic tears gush out, for the griefs of those who bind the chains on the helpless slave!—And what are the griefs that call forth these public demonstrations of sympathy? Their right to enslave and hold in bondage millions of unoffending human beings has been called in question. This has excited their alarm. This is the fountain of all their woes.

These slavery, sympathetic meetings were followed up by mobs and riots to put down by open violence all discussion. Mobs have generally been composed of the low, profligate and base vulgar, but not so with these northern and southern mobs in behalf of slavery. Men of high rank, in wealth and political power, have not been ashamed to place themselves in the front of these riotous assemblages, setting at defiance all law, all order, all human right. In this they were indeed, acting in a manner perfectly accordant with the cause which they espoused.

Not less than thirty American citizens were put to death by rioters; many others were scourged and otherwise tormented, without any forms of law, or rights of trial. It is not too much to say that every death thus inflicted was a real murder.—Where was the arm of the law reposing all this time? where was it concealed while all these outrages on the good order of society were perpetrated? was there no one to bring the offenders to justice? None. Loose reins were given to the fiercest passions, to such an extent that sober and reflecting men began to fear the entire dissolution of the whole fabric of social order.

One instance may suffice for all. An intention was announced to form a state anti-slavery society at Utica. Many public prints called on the citizens of Utica to prevent it by violence, and there were found men, yes men of high standing, to respond to the call. Several hundred delegates—men, who are equal to any others for moral worth and integrity, assembled in the month of November, and had the grant of a public hall, from the corporation of the city to hold their convention. The mob interfered, and the hall was closed against them. They met in a church. The mob too assembled, among whom were a member of congress and a judge of the court, and passed the most inflammatory resolutions, denounc-

ing the convention, and threatening violence unless it would dissolve immediately. A delegation bearing these denunciations and threats was sent to the convention. A constitution had been adopted before the heralds of the mob arrived. To prevent the demolition of the church and the shedding of human blood, the society adjourned to Peterboro, a village about twenty miles distant, where they transacted the remainder of their business. Amidst these scenes an incident occurred, which clearly showed that the cause of the slavery men, was not promoted by these outrages. Mr. Gerrit Smith, who had for many years been one of the most efficient and eloquent supporters of the colonization scheme, and a powerful and zealous advocate of the temperance cause, abandoned the colonization society and avowed himself an abolitionist. We hope it is not too much to say that the colonizationists could not have lost a more powerful support, nor the abolitionists gained an abler auxiliary in any other individual in the United States.\* Mobs in all countries have preceded persecution. It was a mob that stoned the proto martyr Stephen, it was by mobs that the apostle Paul was brought into so many perils, and from these that he endured so much suffering. It was a mob that burnt Knox in effigy. The persecution of the early christians by the Pagan government of Rome, and that of the Scottish Reformers by the Popish Mary soon followed these outrages of the mobs. It has been and doubtless is the intention of many that persecution by the civil arm, shall become the sequel to the doings of the mobs in this land. Southern statesmen call loudly for the enactment of laws by the legislatures of the free states, making the discussion of the slave question penal. One governor of the south, has made a demand on the governor of New-York, to deliver up to him, an editor of an anti-slavery paper, that he may be put on trial for his life, before a court and jury of slave masters. Another governor has declared, in a late message to his legislature, that all anti-slavery men "ought to be put to death without benefit of clergy." These sentiments are responded to by some northern men, who call for law to muzzle the press and make it criminal to utter doctrines adverse to Negro slavery. How far they will succeed God only knows. We know, however, that "he maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and restraineth the remainder thereof."—The tone of discussion in congress, rather seems to indicate

\*Mr. Buchanan, lately said on the floor of congress that he had never yet seen one intelligent man who was an abolitionist. Were there but one such member of the anti-slavery society as Gerrit Smith, it would be enough to refute such slander.

that the friends of the rights of man have need of grace to prepare them for the endurance of suffering for righteousness' sake.

There was no small degree of anxiety in the nation, to see in what light this all-absorbing topic would be presented in the message of the President to congress, should he touch the subject. Many hoped that as he had been a member of a manumission society, he would pass the subject without notice, or touch it in such a manner, as would be an honour to the American character. These expectations have been disappointed. The President interferes in favour of slavery, and denounces the friends of emancipation. In this connection, it is proper to recite, as it is short, all that part of his late message which refers to this subject. He goes on to say: "I must also invite your attention to the painful excitement produced in the south, by attempts to circulate through the mails, inflammatory appeals addressed to the passions of the slaves, in prints and various sorts of publications, calculated to stimulate them to insurrection, and to produce all the horrors of a servile war."

"There is doubtless no respectable portion of our countrymen, who can be so far misled as to feel any other sentiment than that of indignant regret at conduct so destructive of the harmony and peace of the country, and so repugnant to all the principles of our national compact, and to the dictates of humanity and religion. Our happiness and prosperity essentially depend upon peace within our borders—and peace depends upon the maintenance, in good faith, of those compromises of the constitution, upon which the union is founded. It is fortunate for the country that the good sense, the generous feeling, and the deep-rooted attachment of the people of the non-slaveholding states to the union, and to their fellow-citizens of the same blood in the south, have given so strong and impressive a tone to the sentiments entertained against the proceedings of the misguided persons who have engaged in these unconstitutional and wicked attempts, and especially against the emissaries from foreign parts who have dared to interfere in this matter, as to authorize the hope that these attempts will no longer be persisted in. But if these expressions of the public will shall not be sufficient to effect so desirable a result, not a doubt can be entertained, that the non-slaveholding states, so far from countenancing the slightest interference with the constitutional rights of the south, will be prompt to exercise their authority in suppressing, so far as in them lies, whatever is calculated to produce this evil."

“In leaving the care of the other branches of this interesting subject to the state authorities, to whom they properly belong, it is nevertheless proper for congress to take such measures as will prevent the post office department, which was designed to foster an amicable intercourse and correspondence between all the members of the confederacy, from being used as an instrument of an opposite character. The general government, to which the great trust is confided, of preserving inviolate the relations created among the states by the constitution, is especially bound to avoid in its own action, any thing that may disturb them. I would, therefore, call the special attention of congress to the subject, and respectfully suggest the propriety of passing such a law as will prohibit, under severe penalties, the circulation in the southern states, through the mail, of incendiary publications intended to instigate the slaves to insurrection.”

In this document there are three things which the friends of human liberty must regret, especially, from a quarter so respectable. 1. All the advocates of immediate emancipation are denounced as persons of no respectability; for it is affirmed that they and their friends are no respectable portion of the community. This severe denunciation extends to many hundreds of clergymen and gentlemen of the bar and to many thousands of citizens reputable farmers, merchants and mechanics, who have maintained unsullied reputations, and who have never been charged with any wrong doing, except that they have plead the cause of human liberty. Numerous, large and respectable judicatories of the church, who have passed resolutions in favour of abolition are held up to odium, as “*the offscourings of all things*,” and as “*turners of the world up side down*.” 2. They are commended to the indignation of the virtuous and patriotic part of the community. One would have thought rioters, and mobs, in the execution of their code of Lynch-laws, had manifested excitement enough to satisfy the most violent, without adding more fuel to the flame, for the purpose of swelling the conflagration, that burnt with such fury as justly to alarm all thoughtful men. One would have expected the pilot to have poured oil on the troubled waters, while the tempest of popular passion was raging with unbridled fury. It will be well if those who have been so ready to excite the riotous passions of the mob are not made themselves to feel the fury of its rancour. 3. The enactment of “severe penalties” is recommended, 1. Indirectly to the state governments, and 2. Directly to the general government. It is said

if these attempts “be persisted in, not a doubt can be entertained, that the non-slaveholding states, so far from countenancing the slightest interference with the constitutional rights of the south, will be prompt to exercise their authority in suppressing, so far as in them lies, whatever is calculated to produce this evil.” “*The slightest interference*” with the business of slave-holding is speaking against it in private life. It is not interference by force of arms, but the uttering of one word against the evil, that must be prevented. The meaning of all this is, that if any man shall dare to publish, preach, or even speak of negro slavery as an evil—if those who have done so shall persist in it, then it will be the duty of the states promptly to repress this freedom of speech, of the press, and of the pulpit, by penal laws. If any ecclesiastical judicatory shall touch the subject of slavery, the state legislatures must be prompt to interfere with their proceedings, and declare them by law seditious. By such enactments Thomas Jefferson, William Wirt, and Benjamin Franklin, were they alive, would be put under the ban, especially Mr. Jefferson, who in his notes on Virginia, says, “that if the slaves would rise to assert their freedom, he knows no attribute of God Almighty that would induce Him to take part with the whites.” Were the legislatures of the free states to act on this hint of the president, it would be well to consider whether he who would print or sell the notes on Virginia, containing such incendiary doctrines, should not be subjected to civil pains. We have never seen any abolition paper that contained a more inflammatory sentiment. In truth, according to this doctrine of the message, all that Clarkson ever wrote, all that Wilberforce ever published, all that Jefferson or Franklin ever uttered on the subject of slavery, must be locked up, or burnt by the hands of the common hangman, as the Covenants of the Protestants in Britain were in 1666, by the order of Charles II. Let this business once begin and God only knows where it will end. 2. Congress are recommended to interfere by “*severe penalties*,” to prevent as far as in them lies, of course, the great evil of free discussion. These severe penalties plainly indicate what it is intended shall be done by the state legislatures.

It is plainly to be inferred that the discussion of any article of the constitution, with a view to its amendment, is a criminal attack on the union. Such has not heretofore been the doctrine of statesmen on this subject. Far from it indeed—Amendments have been recommended, discussed with even vehemence, and passed. But this can never happen again, if

no provision of the constitution can be questioned, without subjection to civil pains.

Again, there are several things wanting in this solemn document, omissions hardly less to be regretted than its harsh declarations and denunciations. 1. There is not the remotest hint that any liberty of speech is vested in man by his Maker, or is guaranteed by the Federal constitution, or by the charters of the states. 2. There is no intimation that the coloured people have been deprived of any right, or that it is any evil either physical or moral to hold them, unoffending as they are, in perpetual bondage. 3. There is no suggestion that the two millions of slaves are objects of compassion, and that those who plead their right to liberty, may be moved by a generous sympathy for them in their hard bondage. 4. There is not even insinuated any disapprobation of those murderous riots, which have threatened the dissolution of society, while they have destroyed the property and taken the lives of peaceable citizens, in the exercise of constitutional rights. Are these things becoming a great, a generous and free people? They are dark and portentous clouds gathering in the horizon, threatening to burst over the land ere long, in all the fury of persecution.

If the holding of two millions of men in bondage be at all a sin, it is one of deep and dreadful aggravation. For it is done by a nation whom God has made free; by a nation that boasts above all the kingdoms of the world, of its devotion to freedom; by a nation that has been highly favoured of Heaven; by a nation enlightened by millions of Bibles, and fifteen thousand churches; and by a nation that proclaims the doctrine that all men are born free and equal. If it be a wrong it has been and is inflicted on millions of helpless strangers who have never harmed us, who have been forced from the land of their fathers' sepulchres, and who have borne the yoke of bondage with extraordinary patience. If it be a wrong, it has been persevered in for many generations, and on this account, is deeply aggravated. There was a time, when among the people of the free states and indeed even among the people of the south, it was scarcely necessary to argue this topic—all or nearly all admitted that slavery was a moral evil. These days it seems have passed away. Slave masters generally seem to have come to a determination to maintain boldly the doctrine that they have a moral right to hold the slaves and their children in endless bondage. After all, slavery is a sin, and a sin of enormous aggravation, for:—

1. It is contrary to the whole tenor of divine revelation, and

to special commandments and declarations. To the whole tenor of the Bible—Jesus Christ came to emancipate from bondage. “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,” Luk. iv. 18. What minister of the gospel could expound in the southern states this text, according to its true import, without being deemed there an incendiary? As deliverance from bondage is the burden of the Saviour’s mission, so the sacred pages are quickened with the vital energies of liberty. The gospel proclaims a heavenly jubilee, and “they are a blessed people that know the joyful sound.” The Bible teaches every where justice, mercy, kindness, compassion, and good will to all men.

It is contrary to many special intimations of the will of God. “If ye oppress not the stranger—then will I cause you to dwell in this place.” Jer. vii, 6, 7. “Thou shalt not oppress a stranger, nor vex him.” Ex. xxii, 21. This command is frequently reiterated in various forms. The Africans are emphatically strangers, and from generation to generation are not regarded as citizens, in the southern states, but as strangers. Surely to enslave a man, to subject his will to mine without his consent, to force him under the lash, to labour not for himself, but for his master, to deprive him of the right of acquiring property, is to oppress him. Were any southern slave master kidnapped, transported to the shores of Africa, and there reduced to the condition in which he keeps his slave, he would call it—all the earth would call it—oppressing the stranger. “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due,” Prov. iii. 27. Is not liberty a good thing? Has not every man, a right to his liberty who has not forfeited it by some crime? Here is a command to give the African his liberty. “Woe to him that useth his neighbour’s service without wages and giveth him not for his work,” Jer. xxii. 13. Is not the slave his master’s neighbour? He lives near him. He does not, he cannot while a slave give him wages. If there ever was, or can be an instance where a man uses another’s *service* without wages, it is that of negro slavery. God then denounces a woe on the holder of the slave. “And ye were now turned and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming every man liberty to his neighbour. Jer. xxxiv. 15. Here the slave is called a neighbour. When the people set them free, they did what God esteemed right or justice, and of course when they held them

in bondage, they did what was wrong or unjust in his sight.—“But ye turned and polluted my name and caused every man his servant and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids: therefore thus saith the Lord, ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming liberty every man to his brother and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence and to the famine,” v. 15 and 16. By holding their neighbour in bondage, they polluted the name of God, whose image was in the slave, and they did not hearken to God; therefore he sent on them the sword, pestilence and famine, to show them how deeply their sins were aggravated in his sight. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Luk. x. 27. He who enslaves his neighbour and appropriates to himself all the proceeds of his labour, does not love his neighbour as himself. He would not reduce himself to that condition, to which he has reduced his neighbour. Besides, this command comprehends the whole of the second table of the law, and therefore he who breaks it, violates every precept of that summary of social duty. “Do to all men, as you would that they should do unto you.” “God hath made of one blood all men to dwell on all the face of the earth.” “He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.” Ex. xxi. 16. The kidnapper, the slave dealer, and the slave holder, all incur this penalty: for—“The law was made—for men stealers.” 1. Tim. i. 9 and 10. These texts are but a specimen of hundreds of others similar.

In reply to all this we are told that Abraham held slaves; that the Israelites were permitted of God to enslave the heathen around them and even their own brethren. Those who do not acknowledge the Holy Scriptures as the rule of legislation, cannot avail themselves consistently of any argument from that source. Neither the Federal nor any state constitution, recognizes the Bible as their supreme law, nor indeed as binding at all the consciences of legislators. Repudiating its claims in all other matters, such as adopt the principle of these instruments, that the word of God is not a law to human law-givers, ought not to resort to it for a justification of their oppression of human beings. Nothing can be more preposterous than the attempt to make the oracles of truth hostile to the liberties of men. Such attempts are the grossest perversions. Were it ever true that the patriarchs and Israelites enslaved men, as

the southern slave masters do the African race, and nothing was ever more untrue, it would not avail them. Abraham had two wives, Jacob four, and Solomon one thousand. Would they plead these examples as a justification of polygamy? The argument would be as available. The sons of Adam married their own sisters; and does that justify such marriages now?—One of Abraham's servants would have been his heir, had not God given him a son. And there is not a shadow of evidence that those families, belonging to his household were reduced to servitude by lawless violence, as the Africans have been by slave traders, whom the law of the land brands as pirates.—They were evidently related to the patriarch, rather as clients have been in other nations, to their patrons. No one can ever prove that those who were bought with Abraham's money, had not voluntarily by indenture, entered into the service of their former masters. And it is perfectly certain that if they were reduced to slavery by unlawful predatory violence, those who so enslaved them sinned against both God and man, had before God no right to them, and could transfer none to Abraham.—It is admitted that Abraham's descendents held bondmen, with the divine permission, but not in such bondage as the slaves of the south. In some instances God allowed them to reduce to the condition of servants, persons of the seven nations, as a commutation for death. God's peculiar people were commissioned by the supreme and righteous judge of all the earth to exterminate the Canaanitish nations. A few were excepted, to be made hewers of wood and drawers of water. If the slaughter of the seven nations does not authorize the United States to exterminate any neighbouring or remote nation, neither does the reduction of some of them to bondage authorize Negro slavery. Of those nations that were round about them, they might procure bond-servants, whose time was sold for debt, or who had been reduced into that state as a punishment for crime, or who had been made captives in lawful war; for under such limitations the service must have been placed, otherwise the law would have authorized lawless outrage.—How utterly shocking to the pious mind the impious supposition, that the divine law legalized such enslaving of men, as that which the United States denounces as piracy! And whatever distinction the law made in granting some prerogatives in this respect to God's covenant people, is now abolished; for the Jew under the Gospel is not more favoured than the Gentile. Were there in this respect special privileges granted to Christian nations, the United States could not claim them,

as the constitutions do not pretend to be predicated on the Christian religion. If the Bible condemns the Negro Slave Trade, then it cuts up slavery by the roots. As to the enslaving of their brethren, the Israelites were absolutely prohibited:—all men are now brethren. “Thou shall not compel him to serve as a bondman.” Lev. xxv. 39. “As a yearly hired servant shall he be with him,” v. 53. This latter text shows that there were hired servants different from those that were hired yearly. Servants hired for life on stipulated terms.—The law of the Jews was in relation to the poor most benevolent. If one become poor, money must be given him without interest, or he must be set up again in business on stock furnished him without usury. If he still cannot succeed, being found incompetent to provide for himself, he is sold or put under the care of some one with his family, who will direct his labour and teach him to work and transact business. In the seventh year he goes out free, and he must not go out empty—his master, as he is called, must set him up again in business. Lev. xxv. 35, 55. And this most benevolent provision for the poor is compared to negro slavery and pressed into the service of oppression! Would to God, the African race were treated according to these most benevolent laws.—They and all other unoffending residents in Christian nations, have a right to be so dealt with, if there is any force in this law, as there is assuredly.

The slave masters and their apologists endeavour to press the new Testament too into their service. Christ, we are told, preached not against slavery among the Jews, though it existed while he was on earth, his disciples were equally indulgent to that slavery which was practised in the Roman empire, and the early christians were slave-holders. For some reason or other, both Christ and his disciples were considered incendiaries by opulent slave-holders, both of the Jews and Gentiles, and were subjected to the violence of mobs, and to the persecuting severities of iniquitous laws. But Christ did denounce slavery. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law of the prophets.” Mat. vii. 12. The benevolent Jewish law providing for the poor was a part of the law that he recommends. Unless masters wished their servants to reduce them to slavery, he denounced that kind of oppression. The apostles denounced slavery. “If ye can be free use it rather.”—This was their advice to servants. They did, indeed, enjoin upon them, when they could not be free, to be patient and re-

signed to this afflictive dispensation of God's providence, as Christ enjoins on his followers: "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also." Mat. v. 39.—Paul to Timothy recognizes the Jewish law agasint man-stealers as still binding under the New Testament. Their whole system of doctrine in all its benevolent import is a denunciation of slavery.

Whether slaves were held by the early Christians or not, one thing is certain, "not many rich men after the flesh were called"—of course, there were not among them many opulent slave-holders. That they had people under them who are called servants, is indeed true, so have Christians in England, so have we in the free states, but we have no slaves. Because the word servant occurs so often in the English law books, and in those of our non-slave holding states; it would be just as fair to infer that the English and we hold slaves, like the coloured bondmen of the south, as to infer from the language of the New Testament that the apostolic disciples were slave holders. They slander the early disciples of Jesus, who draw this unwarranted and wicked conclusion. That Onesimus was any other kind of a servant than is held in England or in the state of New-York, cannot be proved; for it is not true. If he had been the *property* of Philemon, as his horse or his dog, Paul could never have affirmed that he might have retained him without wrong to his fellow christian. Let not then slave-holding clergymen, slave-holding professors, and others silence the clamours of conscience, by an attempt to persuade themselves that the patriarchs, apostles and disciples of the Lamb, were their predecessors in binding the yoke on the neck of the slave. Heaven forbid such a perversion. Long did the Jesuits and other panders of despotism, pretend to preach from the oracles of the living God, the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance to tyrants. Their false comments have long since been exploded, and these abusers of divine revelation justly held up to the honest indignation of the lovers of the Bible and friends of rational liberty. To that class of men we refer the apologists of slavery much better than to number them with those holy men who in ancient times shed the lights of truth and liberty on a benighted world.

2. Slavery is a sin, because all the right of the master to the slave originated in piracy, and the right of the present holder is not better than that of the captor from whom he bought him. This matter is settled by a law of the United States and by the voice of christendom. A part of the law of con-

gress on this subject is as follows:—"If any citizen of the United States, being of the crew or ship's company of any foreign vessel engaged in the slave trade, or any person whatever, being of the crew or ship's company, of any vessel owned in whole or in part, or navigated for or in behalf of any citizen or citizens of the United States, shall land from any such vessel, and on any foreign shore, seize any negro or mulatto, not held to service or labour, by the laws of either of the states or territories of the United States, with intent to make such negro or mulatto a slave, or shall decoy or forcibly bring or carry, or shall *receive* such negro, or mulatto on board any such vessel with intent as aforesaid, such citizen shall be adjudged a pirate, and on conviction thereof, before the circuit court of the United States, for the district, wherein he may be brought, or found, shall suffer death."—Gordon's Digest of the Laws of the United States, p. 719. Sec. 3367.

This remarkable act decides many important points.—

1. That the African is a human being, entitled to the rights that are common to men; for piracy is a violation of human rights, and an attack on those who belong to our species.—
2. That those who injure an African, by depriving him of his rights, are guilty of as great a crime, as if they had inflicted the same injury on a white man; for no greater punishment could be decreed against one who would unjustly enslave any European or American.
3. That the enslaving of the African in the way in which it has always been done, is a violation of the laws of nations and an outrage on the rights of man.—
4. That he who buys a slave from the original captor, with intent to enslave him, has no right to him, and is, in fact, as guilty as the pirate who originally seized him. He who "*receives*" the captured African on board his ship is adjudged a pirate and suffers death. He may have bought him, and paid for him, but the plea will not avail; for "he is found in his hand," and therefore his crime is capital. In this instance, the Jewish law is copied into the statute book of the United States. "And he that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." Ex. xxi. 16. As far as regards the continent of Africa and the high seas, this is the law of the United States.
5. That all those Africans who have been seized, dragged from their native land, and reduced to bondage, have right to their freedom. The white man, whom the pirate seizes has a right to his freedom, no matter how many hands he may have passed through, no matter how many times bought and sold, no matter in what

land, or in whose hand he may be found. The enslaver of the African commits as great a crime, as he who enslaves a white man; and the rights of the coloured man have been as much outraged; if then the white man has a right to his freedom, so has the black.

It is true, indeed, the law makes an exception of those who are held to service in any state or territory of the United States, but that does not alter the principle on which the act is based. Before God, and the nations and in sight of the Universe, the Africans had the same rights before the United States' congress enacted that law, as they have since, and as much injustice was done them forty years ago, when they were forcibly brought into bondage as is done them now. The sin of those who hold them in slavery, is greatly aggravated, indeed since this nation has proclaimed before the whole world its piratical origin; but the rights of the African race have neither been increased or diminished. If the slave trade was not, in its nature, piracy before the passage of the law, the act was grossly iniquitous.

The conduct of the United States in this whole business, has been like that of the Lacedemonians, whose general treacherously seized the city of Thebes, their friend and ally. The government of Lacedemon, condemned the general for treachery, and removed him from his command, but they retained the city. The slave traders have been adjudged pirates, and condemned to death, but the slaves who had been captured by these marauders, are still held in bondage. All that is said of their benevolent treatment, by their masters, were it true to the letter, is no justification of their retaining possession of property, the right to which originated in the piratical plunder of the nations of Africa. This statute of the United States is based on principles which are utterly irreconcilable with the right of the slave-masters to hold property in the flesh and blood of the African race—with *receiving* and holding in slavery the coloured man, who has been transferred to him by a pirate, whose hands were reeking with blood, and whose neck deserved the halter. And what difference is there between him who enslaves the African, when born in Africa, and him who enslaves the coloured child born in this land of freedom? Had the holder a right to the mother, who gave him a right to her child? He cannot claim even under a title derived from a slave trading pirate. His right is the same, as that of the pirate to the mother, whom he seized, and received in his ship or the slave coast. If it was piracy to enslave the mother,

what is that act to be called that enslaves the child, especially if that child be the offspring of the man, who makes it his slave, and sells it as goods and chattels, with his horses and oxen?

3. Slavery is a sin, because it is necessarily, especially in a free country, a source of cruelty, suffering and vice. Of cruelty; for slaves cannot be made to work for others without the use of the lash:—of cruelty; for husbands and wives, parents and children are torn from one another's embraces, and all the most tender ties of kindred affections ruptured, so that even the hope of earthly comfort sickens and dies. While the slave is considered as property, this is unavoidable. Masters become insolvent, masters die, and their property must in the former case be sold under the hammer, in the latter it is either exposed to sale or distributed among heirs, often living remote from each other. That these are the practical results of slavery in the south is not denied, and we may reasonably infer that in a christian country like this, where there are so many incentives to benevolence, that what does in fact happen, may be fairly charged on the system:—Of cruelty again; for it becomes necessary to keep the slave in ignorance, lest he should know his rights and become turbulent. Can any thing be more cruel than forcibly shutting out the light of knowledge from the human mind? It deprives man of all the higher and nobler sources of enjoyment and makes his pleasures, if he have any, gross and sensual, as those of the brute. The mind is endowed of God with faculties, and stimulated by curiosity, to acquire knowledge; and he has furnished the means of intellectual improvement. To quench this light in darkness is more cruel than to put out the eyes, lest they see the light of heaven. Can we believe that unless it were necessary, in order to render slave property secure and profitable, the law of some slave-holding states would make it a criminal offence, for even a father to teach his own child to read! It is cruel because the slave is generally deprived of the means of salvation. He cannot read the holy scriptures; it is a sealed book to him, and he perishes for lack of knowledge. The hands of the Ethiopian are bound in manacles, yes, even by the ministers of religion, lest he should stretch them out to God. He is blindfolded, lest he should see the light of liberty and pant for its enjoyment: he is kept ignorant, lest he should seek that "liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free." The writer has travelled through the southern states and knows all this to be true. Slavery is a fruitful source of sin. Mr. Jefferson says,

and who knew better: "There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people, produced by the existence of slavery among us." And after describing the process by which southerners, are "nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny" as he expresses it, until they become tyrants, he adds:—"The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should the statesman be loaded, who permitting one half of the citizens, thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the amor patriæ of the other."\* This is the voice of a slaveholder. It will not be difficult to find such statesmen as those whom he holds up to execration. Were he now alive and now to publish such sentiments as these, what prospect would he have of being chosen president of the United States?—Would he not rather be threatened with the halter and the scaffold? This change in the feelings of society, is perhaps one of the best evidences of the truth of his declaration, that slavery has "an unhappy influence on the manners of our people." While the master and his household are freed from the necessity of labour, the time, which would be otherwise usefully occupied, is spent in voluptuous indulgence, in the bar room, at the card table, at the horse-race, in the cock-pit, or in the ——. "But," as Mr. Jefferson remarks in this connection, "it is impossible to be temperate and pursue this subject," especially as we have little reason to say with the same author: "The way, I hope is preparing, under the auspices of Heaven, for a *total emancipation*, and that it is disposed, in the order of events to be with the consent of their masters."

4. Slavery is a sin; for it is in direct opposition to the whole doctrine of American liberty. Miserably do the advocates of oppression falter, when they touch the subject under this aspect, and attempt to prove that negro slavery is consistent with the doctrine "that all men are born free and equal." That the African race are men they dare not deny; for every other consideration apart, they would by doing so, destroy their right to a large representation in congress, based on their slave population. Then there is no way of evading the force of this maxim drawn from the oracles of the living God. "He hath made of one blood all men to dwell on all the face of the earth." Avowing this doctrine of the declaration of independence and solemnly sworn to its support, they set it at nought

\*Jefferson Notes on Virginia, p. 240-1.

by holding two millions of men in bondage, who are born as free as themselves, and proclaiming their determination to make them and their children slaves forever. Was there ever, can there be a more glaring contradiction? And for pleading this doctrine, and insisting on its universal application, they affirm that their fellow citizens "should be put to death without benefit of clergy."\*

If these arguments do not prove negro slavery to be a sin, we may despair of ever proving any wrong done by men to be sinful. It is forbidden by the authority of Heaven, it originates in piracy, it is the fruitful parent of cruelty, suffering and sin, it is contrary to established maxims of American liberty that are founded on the word of God. So much force have arguments like these, (we have the authority of Governor Marcy, in his late message to the New-York Legislature for it) on the citizens of this state that they all unite in its condemnation. The Governor says: "Is it" (the object of anti-slavery,) "to convince the people of this state that slavery is an evil? Such is now the universal sentiment." If it be an evil and is so regarded by the universal sentiment of the people of this state, why all these attempts to crush every effort to awaken among us a due sense of the evil and to prepare the way for its removal? The author of that document admits that those who are making these efforts are conscientious. He says:—"A few individuals in the middle and eastern states, acting on mistaken motives of moral and religious duty, &c." All agree in sentiment that it is an evil, some persons conscientiously reason against it, to awaken public attention to the subject; and yet, if we do not misunderstand the Governor, he recommends that unless they cease from these efforts in opposing an evil, severe penal statutes shall be enacted, and heavy punishments inflicted on these opponents of the evil. He affirms that the constitution of the United States binds all to support the evil, and yet they may say, publish, or preach nothing that tends to its removal. So open a recommendation to persecute for righteousness' sake, we have never read. When persecutors recommend and exercise violence, they represent the doctrines which they would suppress as evil; but in this instance, it is admitted that the abolitionists are opposing evil. The pretext for this attack on the liberty of speech, on the liberty of the press, and on the liberty of conscience, is that the slave masters cannot be convinced; that northern people do not need discussion for they are all agreed in the great principle of the

\*See Gov. McDuffie's late message to the Legislature of South Carolina.

abolitionists, that slavery is an evil. So it seems that all discussion is to be foreclosed, and made treason. To please the holders of slaves, the people of the free states, however great they may think the sin, must not discuss it—the south proclaim their resolution to continue it forever—and the friends of liberty in the north must not say them nay ; and so this mischief preying on the vitals of the commonwealth must be perpetuated without any one daring to propose a remedy. All this reasoning of the governor would have applied with as great force against the efforts of Wilberforce and other philanthropists in the British parliament and nation, for the abolition of the slave trade. It might have been said, the whole people of England, Scotland and Ireland, are of one sentiment that the slave trade is evil, the slave traders and the West India planters cannot be convinced—they are exasperated only, and so all discussion must cease. No attempt like this was ever made by the British Government, and is it to be recommended in this free nation, where the liberty of the press is held to be so sacred and secured under so many solemn guarantees? Forbid it mercy, forbid it justice, forbid it Heaven. On this principle the prophets of Judah were all in error, when they preached against the idolatry of the golden calves and of Baal in the ten tribes. All the people of Judah were of one sentiment that it was evil, and the Israelites could not be convinced—it provoked their rage only, to interfere with a domestic institution. In fact, they did so reason. “Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel : the land is not able to bear his words—also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there : But prophesy not again any more, at Bethel ; for it is the King’s chapel and *it is* the King’s court.” Amos, vii. 10, 12, 13. Amos was a prophet of Judea, and Amaziah would not allow of any officious meddling with the domestic institutions of the ten tribes, guaranteed under their constitution of government.

But the arguments of this message do not appear to be very well founded ; for if as the southern people say, their slaves are contented and happy, what danger can there be among them from abolition papers ? Why is there danger of the explosion of a magazine ? Again, if there is no possibility of convincing any slave-holder and inducing him to free his bondmen, what harm can all the reasonings of abolitionists do either to the free, or to the slave population ? They and their

apologists here affirm that there is danger. It must arise from the discontent of wretched slaves, or from the convictions of masters' consciences, or from both. So it appears that an effect on the south, favorable to emancipation may be produced by the labours of anti-slavery societies. The sympathetic meetings, the mobs, the riots, the lynching, nay even the message itself bear unequivocal testimony, either that the sentiment against slavery in the north is not universal, or that it is feeble, and needs to be quickened and strengthened.—That the means employed will produce this effect is certain and is dreaded.

Mr. Henry Clay in a late speech before the colonization society, puts forth all his ample powers of eloquence to justify these attempts to extinguish all the lights of examination, and to prove that it may be done without interfering with the freedom of the press, or the rights of free discussion. His main, indeed his whole argument rests on the ground—that the people of the northern states, under the constitution of the United States, cannot legislate on slavery, and therefore they have no right to discuss the subject. If this reasoning be conclusive, then he has no right, nor has any slave-holder in the south to discuss the proceedings of the anti-slavery societies, for by his own, by the president's, and by the admission of southern men generally, it belongs to the northern states alone to prevent their operations by the arm of the law; they cannot make laws respecting the freedom of the press in New-York or Massachusetts, and according to his reasoning, the southern people may be forcibly prevented from giving utterance to their thoughts on this business without any interference with their rights. Were this reasoning cogent, the press might be restrained by penalties, from publishing a syllable on the subject of the Russian Autocrat's oppression of the Poles, or any tyrannical doings of the despots of Europe or Asia.—Adopt this maxim and reduce it to practice and liberty with all its safeguards would be instantly annihilated. The editor of the newspaper, the private citizen cannot make laws, therefore he may be prevented by force from discussing the project of any law; he cannot execute the laws, therefore he must submit without a murmur or expressing a doubt respecting any executive act. All would thus be reduced to the silence of death and the Egyptian darkness of despotism—a most convenient condition of society for despots.

But in truth Mr. Clay's assumption cannot be admitted.—The Congress of the United States, elected in part by the

people of the free states, has the sole power of legislation on the subject of slavery in the District of Columbia and in all the territories; and the northern people by the constitution, have the same right to discuss, and the same right to legislate respecting the thousands of slaves held under the law of congress alone, that the people of the slave states have respecting those slaves that are held under state laws. Beside all this, the constitution may be amended, and who shall do this, if the northern states, now a great majority of the nation, are to have no voice in the matter? Is it discreet that a minority of the commonwealth in the south, should say to the majority, your mouths shall be forever closed on such points in the constitution as we desire to remain unalterable? Shall that minority, because they have been accustomed to issue their mandates uncontrouled to their millions of slaves, publish also their commands, to millions of freemen, in the same tone of arbitrary power? In doing so, not one man in the free states would obey them, were it not the desire to buy up southern votes and the hopes of mercantile gain. It is wonderful that the slave-holders and their apologists do not see, in those fierce attacks on the liberty of speech, an acknowledgement of the weakness of their cause. If it be a good one, why not allow it to be tested by the severest examination? Why not meet their opponents in the open field of argument, where, in all times past, it has been thought every question of this kind was to be settled. It is always an attribute of oppression to dread the light, hence the attempts to quench its blaze, and with its extinction, to abolish the glories of liberty. Who, a few years ago, would have believed what is now history?—How changed the times! But in the mercy of Heaven, we believe all these attempts will be vain and fruitless—as vain as to attempt to extinguish the luminaries of heaven. The God of heaven has promised that “he will arise and plead the cause of the poor and the needy.” By his judgments on the land he has been doing so, and he will continue his work until “he sets judgement in the earth.” “Lord, when thine hand is lifted up they will not see; but they shall see and be ashamed.” Isa. xxvi. 11.

Some of the late judgments of Heaven on this land are recorded in the preceeding pages; the late conflagrations in the city of New-York gives an additional display of the uplifted arm of Jehovah. Many ministers of the Gospel have endeavored to make a profitable improvement of this calamity, as a warning to men to forsake their sins and “not to trust in un-

certain riches.”\* As causes of this appalling visitation, they have enumerated, the too eager pursuit of wealth, the misimprovement of Gospel ordinances, inordinate sensual indulgence, “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye and the pride of life;” and all this doubtless with great propriety. To this list, I do not hesitate to add, the countenance that has been given to the cause of oppression in the nation and especially in that city. It ought to be placed at the head of the catalogue. There the cause of anti-slavery became prominent, there the mobs originated, there is the home of the anti-slavery society, there are its leading men, against whom the most fierce and fiery opposition of slave masters has been manifested, there 150,000 publications are issued monthly, in pleading the cause of the oppressed, and there the post master first refused to transmit by the mail these heralds of liberty, there the merchants for the sake of gain assembled to denounce emancipation, and politicians with their newspaper editors invoked the public indignation against the cause of abolition and awakened the sleeping furies of the mob. Spreading from that great metropolis, the spirit of disorder and riot infected the land to its remotest borders. To New-York, the eyes of the nation is directed, as the centre of action in the great contest between liberty and slavery. By commerce New-York is vitally connected with the prosperity of the nation and her political influence is felt in the most remote members of the commonwealth. She is the great mart of literature, and the centre of intelligence. When a wound is inflicted on her, the pain is diffused as from the heart, through every artery and vein of the empire. From her commercial resources, the revenues of the national government derive a large portion of their abundance. A great calamity, crippling for a time her energies, ought not to be viewed merely as a visitation of Heaven for the personal sins of her citizens, but as a judgment of God upon the land for flagrant national transgression. As the judgment has been inflicted before the world, the sin which it chastises, is likely to have been committed in sight of the universe.

To view the calamity under this aspect is perfectly consistent with the most benevolent sympathies for the sufferers and active exertions for their relief. Who mourned with such grief over the desolations of Jerusalem, as the prophet Jeremiah, who ascribed the destruction of the city to the rod of

\*For a specimen see the sermon of Dr. Spring, published in the New-York Observer, December 26th, 1835.

God chastising them for idolatry, oppression and other sins.— Apart from declarations of the prophets, the hand of the Lord was perhaps less visible in the sacking of the Jewish capitol by the Assyrian armies, than in the late conflagration in our metropolis. The season had been remarkably dry, rendering every thing that furnishes fuel to fire, very combustible, and imparting unwonted fury to the devouring element. The intense cold of winter had commenced at a period unusually early, so that the oldest inhabitants had never known the frost so severe by the middle of December. There had been frequent burnings on the nights preceding the great conflagration, such as to exhaust the firemen, at a time when all their active energies were most needed. The cold was so intense, that the thermometer stood below zero, the element on which they rely to extinguish the flames was congealed. The hose were frozen and rendered useless. The water in the chambers of the fire engines was converted into ice. The wind in the N. W. blew with the violence of a tempest. How could the hand of God be rendered more visible than by all these circumstances.\* All things thus arranged by Him whom the winds, the waves and the fire obey, between 9 and 10 o'clock on the evening of December 16th, the fire broke out, probably from the bursting of a gas pipe, in Merchant street, among lofty buildings, many stories high, and spread with appalling impetuosity, driven forward in the work of destruction by a tempestuous wind. To the S. W. toward the East river, the streets were narrow, and the houses high. That is the oldest part of the city, the great centre of mercantile wealth and the very heart of the business part of the metropolis. The fire soon blazed up to mid heaven, so that its light was seen through the surrounding country to the distance of more than seventy miles. Store after store replenished with the richest wares from all climes, and block after block of lordly edifices was swept off, and sunk into smouldering ruins with terrific rapidity, so that all efforts to arrest its fearful progress were utterly powerless. In a very little time the south side of Wall street was in a blaze, and the Merchants' Exchange, its greatest ornament, a sumptuous structure was enveloped in flames, its stately dome sent up volumes of fire rich with impetuosity and fury, and quickly fell with a fearful crash into an ocean of fire. In this edifice the post office was kept and of course perished in the wreck. It was now three o'clock, but a few hours from the commence-

\*This abstract is taken from the Journal of Commerce, the Commercial Advertiser, the Observer, the Sun, and other city papers.

ment of the fire ; which had extended northward and westward against the wind, into Wall street, and to the whole of Exchange Place. Every advance made in these directions widened greatly the scene of ruin, as it exposed the ranges of buildings on the south and east to the violence of the flames precipitated upon them by the N. W. wind. Four hours before the destruction of the Exchange, the conflagration had extended to Water street down Wall, and some vessels at the wharves in Coffee House Slip had taken fire. From midnight to morning, the burning mansions of fourteen squares was one dreadful ocean of fire, sending up its fierce surges in terrific grandeur to the clouds. Ever and anon were heard explosions like the discharge of heavy artillery, adding to the dreadful majesty of the scene. Blazing fragments were borne on the wings of the wind across the East river, to the distance of many miles on Long Island. The city of Brooklyn was thought to be in danger, and some edifices at the navy yard, though a broad river was between them and the burning, took fire. To the south, the progress of ruin in the direction of Coenties' Slip was arrested by the blowing up of many houses. The fire raged for fifteen hours, from nine o'clock on the evening of the 16th, to twelve at noon, on the 17th, when it ceased to extend its ravages. For several days the ruins continued to send up volumes of smoke.

Mercy was mingled with judgment in this dispensation. Few lives were lost, probably not more than four or five ; and the fall business having been transacted, a great part of the stock of importers and wholesale dealers was sold out. Great also as the destruction was, had the fire broken out one mile farther to the N. W. nearly the whole city would have been laid in ruins. But withal, the extent of the visitation was such as to fill the devout mind with a holy dread of the divine displeasure. Seventeen squares were entirely burnt down, and the greater part of five more shared the same fate, many of them large and all of them opulent. Five hundred and twenty houses, including besides the Exchange, a Dutch Reformed Church, costly and venerable, were reduced to ashes. These mansions had mostly been re-built within five or six years, at great expense. The amount of property consumed has been variously estimated from fourteen to fifty millions of dollars. It can never be accurately ascertained. The committee of relief, who have devoted most attention to the subject, in a communication to the Governor of the state, estimate it at \$20,000,000—a prodigious sum, more than double the amount expended in the

construction of the grand canal, and one fourth more than the whole annual expense of the United States Government. The riches that had been accumulated by many years—yes, by many generations, of care, watchfulness and toil, make to themselves literally wings and in a few hours fly away to heaven. An area of the city one mile in circuit, adorned with costly buildings and works of art, and stored with the precious manufactures and products of every clime and nation, reduced to a worse condition than if all its improvements and wealth had been swept from its surface into the ocean, by a tornado. It has been estimated that more than five thousand persons were thrown out of employ for a great part of the winter.—There had been great reliance on the insurance offices; and it was not anticipated that there could be any great and generally disastrous loss by fire, while these companies had a capital of eleven or twelve millions of dollars. But as the weather had rendered the firemen powerless, so the policies of insurance were but partially available. Of twenty-eight insurance companies, fourteen are become insolvent, and will not be able to make a dividend of more than 40 or 50 per cent. while all the rest have been more or less crippled.—Were their whole capital applied to the relief of the sufferers, which it cannot be, there would still be a deficit of nearly ten millions of dollars. The insolvency of many offices and the crippled state of all, leave the remaining property of the city unprotected. On this quarter too, the calamity is felt in distant parts of the state. In the village of Newburgh, insurances effected in the New-York offices, having been rendered unavailing, the citizens have kept on patrole, night watches against fire.

Many widows, orphans, females for whom benevolent provision for long and approved service, had been made by investments in the fire insurance offices, and aged persons who, to the amount of their whole capital, were stockholders in these institutions, have lost all and are reduced to helpless indigence. The committee of relief estimate the losses of this afflicted class of citizens, at one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. By a long winter, and cholera, the loss of property in 1832, was doubtless greater, but as it was borne by all classes, and in all parts of the state, it was not found to press on any with such severity as this calamity. The dispensation is known and felt by all to be awfully severe; and the judgment has fallen on those chiefly who had the most intimate connections with southern merchants and planters, and who on that

account had been most forward in their apologies for the oppression of their coloured population. It is worthy of remark, that the property of Mr. Tappan, was in a great measure secured, though in the midst of the ruins. His store house was, it is true, burnt down, but as the fire insurance offices of New-York were unwilling to insure his property, lest it should be destroyed by slavery mobs, he had taken out policies in the city of Boston. The coloured people of the city to evince their gratitude to the friend and benefactor of their race, almost risked their lives, among the flames, to save his stock, the greater part of which they carried away and preserved unharmed. They who do not recognize the finger of God in such events as these, must be more blind than the arch slave holder—Pharoah.

Those who believe that negro slavery is an evil, and that calamities such as the New-York conflagrations, are judgments sent to chastise for transgression, cannot refuse to admit that for the countenance given to this sin, in that city, it has suffered. Governor Marcy affirms that all the people of this state unite in the sentiment that it is an evil. It has been demonstrated in the preceding pages, that if it is an evil, it is one of enormous magnitude. It must be so from the very nature of the case. An evil in which two millions of men are made wretched and degraded—an evil in which ten millions of others, under the Federal constitution, as the governor again truly says, are leagued together to support, is surely enormous. It is an evil most likely to call down upon the land appalling judgments, such as that we have been contemplating. We are aware that many persons do not admit that God under the New Testament dispensation, punishes nations or cities for sin, as he did under the Jewish Government. That, they say was a theocracy—or a government of God, and hence all sins committed in the commonwealth were immediately against Jehovah. But does not God reign now over all nations? Is not Jesus Christ as Mediator “King of Kings and Lord of Lords?”—Are not all kings commanded to kiss the Son? Is he not made “Lord of all to the glory of God the Father?” His word was the rule among the Jews, and it is so now; whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. We are under a theocracy now, as really as the descendents of Abraham were in the days of David. In the dispensations of his providence to Israel, God gives us in the Holy Scriptures a specimen of his manner of governing the nations. He shews what he demands of all commonwealths, that have the light of revealed religion

what blessings they may expect who obey his Son, and what judgments he will inflict on those who disobey and rebel.—The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans, written in the 58th year of the christian era, says:—"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." 1. 18. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies, under the Gospel dispensation, for the sin of "crucifying the Lord of glory." We may therefore enforce the maxim that national calamities are sent to punish national sins, from the sufferings of Israel for their sins. If the hand of God is in these late calamities, and who but an atheist will deny it, then he either inflicts for sin, or for no cause. The latter will hardly be asserted by any one who professes to believe in the being and attributes of God. It is the award of the common conscience of all nations, that God punishes with visible judgments, flagrant sins. "And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, no doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." Acts, xxviii. 4. Homer tells us that when the Grecian fleet was wind bound in Aulis, they considered it a token of the wrath of the gods, and that the commander in chief Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter, Ephigenia to appease the winds, which they reckoned among their divinities. This doctrine, as every learned reader knows, is interwoven in the whole texture of Homer's *Illiad*, and the *Eneid* of Virgil.—The plots of the Greek tragedians are founded upon it, especially those of Eschilus and Euripides. It is often referred to even by the very licentious Horace, as in such verses as this: "By our wickedness, we do not suffer Jove to lay aside his vengeful thunderbolts." All this demonstrates that it was the common sentiment of those most enlightened of the pagan nations of antiquity. The American Indian performs lustrations and makes oblations of tobacco and of other articles, to appease the Great Spirit and avert his judgments. The rudest of the Asiatic nations, and of the African tribes offer sacrifices for the same purpose. Hardened sinners in christian nations appear to be nearly alone in denying our maxim.—Having thus proved that the doctrine of the Israelite, on this point was not peculiar to his nation, let us briefly refer to a few instances.

The ten plagues that desolated Egypt were inflicted, for their refusal to emancipate their Israelitish slaves. Their sin was deeply aggravated; for they held in cruel bondage up-

wards of two millions of men. They were called upon to set them free and refused. They might have plead what no apologist for African slavery can plead in the extenuation of their sin—that the people of Israel had come voluntarily into their country—that they dwelt alone in the land of Goshen, that great favour had been shown their ancestors, that husbands and wives were not cruelly torn from each other's embraces—that Hebrew females were not compelled to live in a state of concubinage, with lordly Egyptian masters. They might farther have apologized for their sin, that households were allowed to accumulate property in flocks, herds and other possessions, that they had forms of government in the several tribes, that they had Hebrew rulers to administer their own laws, that they were allowed to assemble for the purpose of worshipping their God in peace, and that no parents were prohibited from imparting any kind of good instruction to their children. None of all these palliations can the abettors of Negro slavery plead. Yet their sin was so aggravated, as to provoke the wrath of God. It is great transgressions, publicly committed and persevered in after remonstrance, that bring on a land judgments, which arrest the attention of all, whether they ascribe them to the finger of God or not. Such was the sin of Egypt. The land had enjoyed prosperity for several generations, while committing the sin. Now the slave masters were called on, before the nation, to set them free, and the call was enforced by the authority of heaven, to execute immediately a deed of universal emancipation in favour of the Hebrew slaves; they refused, and judgment after judgment followed in quick succession, until they were forced to recognize the finger of God, and let the people go.

The people of the ten tribes oppressed and enslaved the poor, and for this the wrath of God was denounced against them. "Thus saith the Lord; for three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes; that pant after the dust on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek of the earth; and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name." Amos, II. 6, 7. They accounted human beings as goods and chattels—they bought and sold them; they turned aside the meek, or maligned the benevolent who remonstrated against these deeds. They were guilty of shameful concubinage. For these sins, the prophet denounces judgment, which was inflicted in part, two years after, in one of the most

dreadful of all divine visitations—an earthquake. Amos prophesied “two years before the earthquake.” Chap. i. v. 1. But they did not reform, and for this and other sins, they were in the days of Hoshea, themselves made captives, and enslaved by Shalmanezar, King of Assyria.

In the catalogue of sins for which the Jews were carried captives to Babylon, we find slavery enumerated. “In the midst of thee they have dealt by oppression with the stranger. In thee they have vexed the fatherless and the widow.” For this, among other sins, alarming judgments are denounced.—“I will blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted.” Ezek. xxxvii. 7 and 24. This judgment was literally poured out on the city, when the Assyrians burnt with fire, its houses, palaces and temple, very soon after the denunciation.

Soon after their restoration from the Babylonian captivity, the people returned to their former slave-holding oppression; for this is a sin to which men cleave with wonderful pertinacity, when they have become habituated to its practice. The good Nehemiah knowing that this was one of the evils for which their city had been reduced to ashes, and themselves exposed to the sufferings of seventy years captivity, unlike modern rulers, in this land, exerted all his authority to accomplish its reform. He exacted a promise from them, confirmed by a solemn oath and covenant, that they would set free their slaves and denounced a heavy curse against those who would violate the covenant. “I also shook my lap and said, so God shall shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise.” Neh. v. 13. He should become houseless and poor, who would be guilty of the sin of enslaving his brethren. Thousands of other examples might be enumerated of public punishment inflicted by Heaven for sin. These have been selected, as they illustrate the principle of God’s government in relation to the sin of slavery.

Let us now turn to others, not taken from the Hebrews.—The general deluge being long before the erection of the Jewish commonwealth, and a catastrophe in which all the nations of the world were involved, cannot be thought peculiar to the Hebrew polity. That it was a judgment for great and very public sins is undeniable. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”—“And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was

filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt : for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me ; for the earth is filled with violence through them : and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Gen. vi, 5, 11, 13. The general principle is here clearly asserted, that nations are punished for their sins. They no doubt were guilty of all manner of enormous and most flagrant crimes—the rulers were doubtless ambitious, seeking more self-aggrandizement than the good of their subjects, and engaging in destructive, and unjust wars to gratify their pride, avarice and ambition. "The same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." These great men were, no doubt, profane swearers, sabbath breakers, infidels, scoffers at religion, libertines, &c. The common people were ignorant, debased and profligate. But of all the vices which degraded the rich and the poor, the rulers and the subjects, none is specified but their "violence." They trampled down the poor, "oppressed the stranger, the fatherless and the widow." The opulent enslaved the indigent, and forced them to labour for their proud oppressors. What variety of forms their oppressing men by violence assumed, we know not, but as human nature is the same in all ages and nations, we may safely infer that the enslaving of their brethern was one of them.—As Noah was a preacher of righteousness, he doubtless reproved these acts of violence ; and announced the coming judgment. He certainly was not a slave holder ; for had he been, his bondmen and bondmaids would have been taken into the ark with him, as a part of his property. We have, in this very awful event, the testimony of God that he punishes men with sore judgments for their iniquities, and especially for their violence. The world in the traditions of many nations, the earth in its marine petrifications on the top of high mountains and other traces of Noah's flood, admonish all nations of the danger of trampling under foot the laws of God, and of doing violence to the rights of man.

The people of Sodom were not Israelites, and yet, for their sins, "the Lord rained down from the Lord out of heaven, fire and brimstone upon the cities of the plain and made them a perpetual desolation." Their fulness of bread and idleness made them proud, luxurious and profligate, and so the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against them. Of course, it will not be inferred that these examples are adduced with a view to represent the sins committed in New-York, as having

been so aggravated as those of the antedelvians, and of the people of Sodom and Gomorah, but merely for the purpose of demonstrating that the dispensation so distressing to this great, opulent and beautiful city, was a visitation of God for sin.

The seven nations of Canaan, were destroyed for their sins ; and because the iniquity of the Amorites was full, God gave commission to his chosen people to destroy them, and to take possession of their land. It was the work of the Lord, as was clearly indicated by the Captain of the Lord's hosts appearing to Joshua, with a drawn sword in his hand to lead Israel and destroy the Canaanites.

The destruction of the great and opulent commercial city of Tyre was for sin. "Javan, Tubal and Mesheck were merchants : they traded the persons of men." In their extensive commerce, they dealt in the slave trade. In their fairs, men were bought and sold among other articles of merchandize.—For this among other transgressions, God says to them : "Thou shalt be broken by the seas, in the depths of the waters, thy merchandize and all thy company, in the midst of thee shall fall. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee ; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more." Ezek. xxvii. 13, 33—36. For trading in the persons of men, God sent the Grecian armies under Alexander the Great, and made that mart of nations a desolation.

Both ancient Babylon and the modern mother of harlots are destroyed by many and great plagues for the multitude of their iniquities. The latter like Tyre, and no doubt the former traded in "slaves and in the souls of men." Rev. xviii. 13. For these sins, a great angel took a stone, like a great mill stone, and cast it into the sea, saying, thus with violence shall that great city of Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. v. 25.

Against six of the seven churches of Lesser Asia, the judgments of Heaven are denounced for their iniquities. "Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and the hearts : and I will give to every one of you according to your works." Rev. ii. 22, 23. These are denunciations of temporal judgments, of so public a nature that they should be known to all the churches. What reason have we to suppose

that God will deal on other principles, with the people of the other cities than he did with those of Thyatira? Are not these things recorded in the book of God, to warn all sinners who may read them that by persevering in the ways of sin, without repentance or reformation, they will bring on themselves "great tribulation." What he says to Thyatira, he says to all:—"I will give to every one of you according to your works."

If there is any principle of God's moral government clearly revealed and irrefragably proved, by the light of nature, by the Holy Scriptures, and by the dispensations of God's providence, it is that when judgments fall on cities and nations, they are the rod of Heaven punishing them for their sins. It would appear then that those who adopt the sentiment that slavery is a moral evil, cannot deny that the late calamity in our metropolis, is a visitation upon the land for this among other sins. Of the sins of our country there is none other placed so prominently before the nations, at least none of which they form so correct an estimate, none with which we are so often and so justly reproached. The republican liberty of which we make so much boast and which is a distinguished blessing of God, has awakened the attention of all nations, and moved the indignation of the tyrants of the old world. Slavery presents so glaring a contrast to all our doctrines of liberty, and to all its enjoyments, and the number of the slaves is so great, amounting to millions, that the attention of the universe has been drawn to the subject. If it is true that the more public sins are, they are the more likely to be punished by Heaven, in a very public manner; then, no one of all the sins of this nation is so signally the object of the divine judgments, as that of slavery.

It remains to be seen whether this stroke of the divine rod will be so improved as to avert other impending tokens of the indignation of Heaven. Hitherto there have been few indications of a penitent submission to the rod. In all the accounts that we have read of this calamity, in the political journals, we have observed but one allusion, and that a very slight one, to the hand of God in the conflagration. Those who fear God and observe with attention the dispensations of his providence, will be humbled before him, and confess their own, and the nations sins, and pray for their pardon and reformation. Many such there are undoubtedly in the land; and it is chiefly for them that these pages are written, in the humble hope that they may be somewhat quickened in the duty of

self-abasement, and prayer to God to sanctify these judgments, and that the faith of the true friends of humanity may be strengthened to a firmer reliance on the promises of God, that "he will arise and plead the cause of the poor and the needy."

As to others who know not God and obey not the gospel, but yield themselves servants to unrighteousness, who enslaved by their own lusts, enslave their brethren, or plead for those who do, little else is expected from them than the usual cry of fanaticism, bigotry, incendiarism, which have been in all ages applied so liberally to those who plead for the truth, the honour of the government of the God of Israel. To all such it may be said, "mock not lest your bands be made strong."—"He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed and that without remedy." That many are exposing themselves to the danger of falling under these denunciations, is perfectly certain. In Congress efforts are made by slave-holders to prevent for ever, in the federal legislature, all discussion of the question of slavery, to bolt their doors against all petitions for the emancipation of the slaves in the District of Columbia, and to issue a declaration that congress has no power to interfere in behalf of the oppressed there. All these measures, they are attempting to carry not by argument, but by banter, threat and denunciation. The representatives from the north generally submit tamely to all this and shew little more spirit to resist them than the southern slave would his master. But the appearances at present indicate that the blighting influence of this evil will have a still more malignant effect on the liberty of the north. If southern slave masters succeed in sealing the lips, and enslaving the press on this subject, other encroachments will follow in rapid succession, until the last vestiges of liberty will be erased from the Magna Charta of the land. We trust they will not succeed, but we do not trust in man for this.

Other judgments will follow if the oppressor persevere in outraging the rights of man. Already there is an Indian war, and we are threatened with a war between this country and Mexico, in which many of our citizens are even now engaged. War also with a great nation is at this moment, hanging over our heads and a mighty hostile armament hovering near our coasts. And, however just our cause may be as it regards the French empire, the storm which gathers and lowers in the horizon, if it breaks on us, will be found charged with great power of destruction. The language of Heaven in these dispen-

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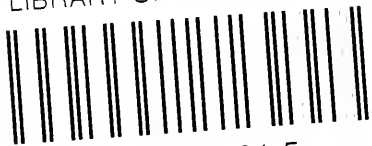








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